



490 N. Meridian Road
Kalispell, MT 59901

October 30, 2020

Preliminary Public Evaluation Notice

Re: Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks land proposal

Dear Interested Party:

Proposed Project Description

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) may be preparing an Environmental Analysis on a proposal to purchase a conservation easement in Lincoln County, Montana. FWP is working with The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and the Stimson Lumber Company on a proposed project to place 27,289 acres of highly productive timberland in northwest Montana just east and south of Libby under conservation easement (see attached map). The proposed conservation easement, to be held by FWP, would allow Stimson to retain ownership of these timberlands, preclude development, protect important wildlife habitat and key landscape connectivity, and provide public access and associated recreational opportunities. The U.S. Forest Service Forest Legacy Program and grant funding raised by TPL would be likely funding sources if this proposal were to proceed to completion.

This project would protect key winter range and a migratory corridor for elk, mule deer, white-tailed deer, and moose. In addition, it would protect critical habitat for bull trout, grizzly bear, and Canada lynx, Endangered Species Act-listed Threatened species found on the property. The project would also reduce the potential for human-wildlife conflicts that often result when wildlife habitat is developed for residential use, especially conflicts with grizzly bears, black bears, and mountain lions. The property currently provides over 26,500 days per year of public hunting and angling use which would be secured in perpetuity under this proposal. Completion of this project would build on the success of the nearby Forest Legacy Program-funded 142,000-acre Thompson-Fisher Conservation Easement, the 28,000-acre Kootenai Valleys Conservation Easement, and the recently completed 22,295-acre Kootenai Forestlands Conservation Project Phase I, which was the first phase of this project. Forest Legacy projects in Montana and Idaho have cumulatively helped to conserve over 300,000 acres of working forestlands.

Project Objectives

The primary objectives of this conservation easement project include:

- Preserving important wildlife habitat and a movement corridor;

- Providing public recreational access; and
- Allowing the property to be sustainably managed for timber production.

Public Involvement and Process

The 30-day comment period will begin on *October 30, 2020*. Please submit either written or e-mailed comments by ***November 29, 2020*** to:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Kris Tempel, Habitat Conservation Biologist
Re: Proposed Conservation Easement
490 N. Meridian Road
Kalispell, MT 59901
ktempel@mt.gov

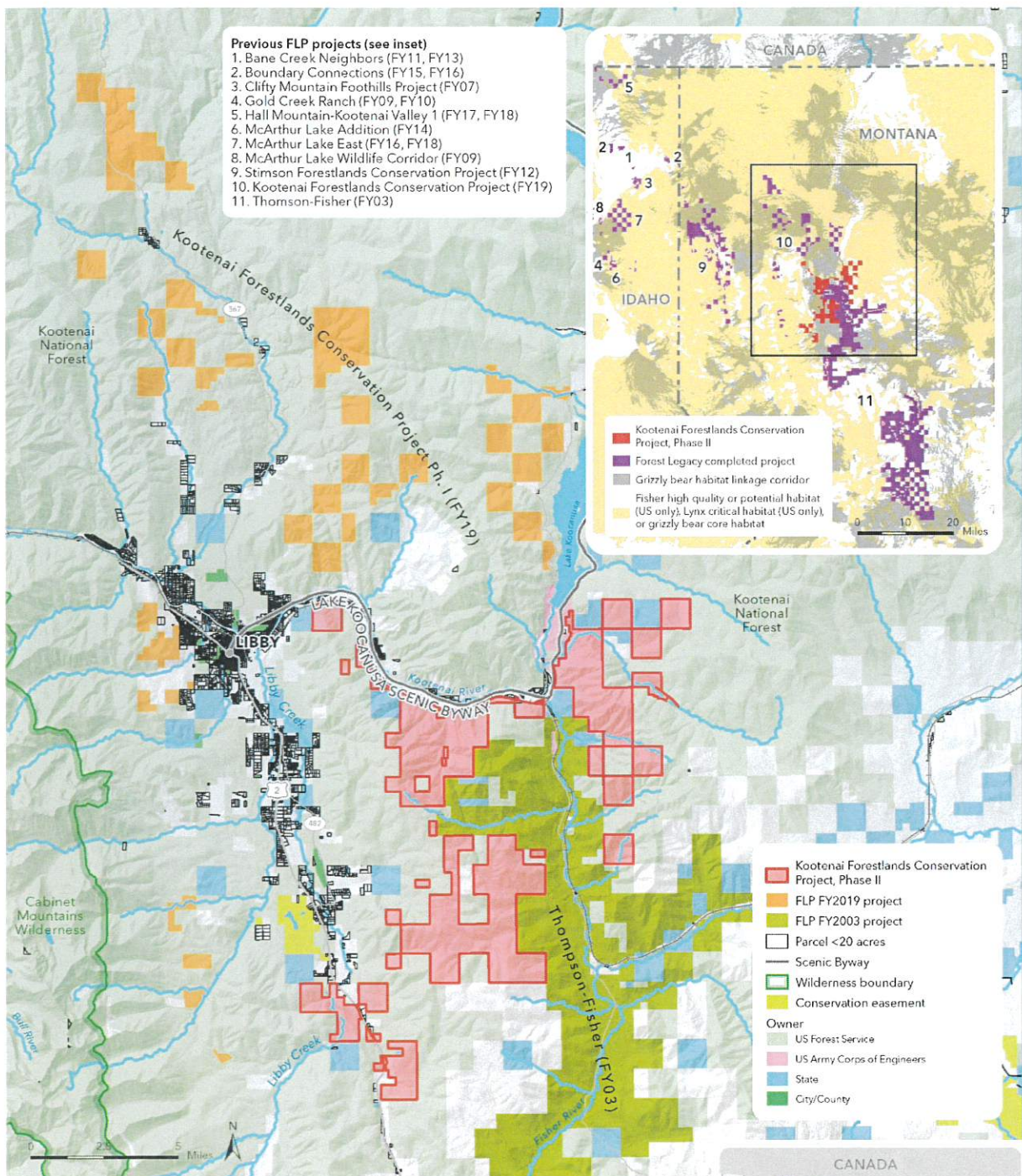
Comments received from this preliminary evaluation will help FWP determine public interest, identify potential issues that would require further analysis, and may provide insight for refining the proposal or for developing and analyzing one or more alternatives. Upon completion of the preliminary evaluation, FWP will determine next steps, which may include conducting an environmental analysis with additional opportunity for public input or taking no further action on the proposed project.

If you have any questions regarding this project or preliminary evaluation process, please contact Kris Tempel at (406) 249-7481 or via email at ktempel@mt.gov.

Sincerely,



Jim Williams
Region One Supervisor



Kootenai Forestlands Conservation Project Phase II

FY2021 FOREST LEGACY PROPOSAL

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